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SACRIFICE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

by

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PREFACE

In the Spring of 1931, in one of Prof. Wm. F. Badè's classes, the writer submitted a short term paper on the subject, "Sacrifice in the Old Testament". During the discussion of the paper in class Dr. Badè offered the comment that an excellent start had been made on the subject and that at some future date the paper might well be expanded for publication or other use. This thesis, therefore, is the outcome of the encouragement and help thus given by Dr. Badè.

In writing this essay I have attempted to show something of the history of sacrifice among the Israelites, as reflected in the Old Testament, and to trace its development from the primitive nomadic beginnings through and beyond the Babylonian Exile.

In the main I have tried to confine myself to the information given in the written

pages of the Old Testament and to ascertain just what were the Hebrew writers' ideas and opinions. This of course has not always been possible and it has been necessary to "browse" around among the books and articles that have been written about sacrifice and thus to borrow some ideas and conclusions from our more learned writers.

It has been a real privilege and a joy to work under the direction of such an "humble master" of the Old Testament as Dr. Badè. This semester while he is again "digging" in the hills of Palestine it has been a pleasure to carry on the work under the capable direction of our good friend Dr. George P. Hedley.

In addition to the reading noted in the "Bibliography" the writer has drawn on his knowledge of the Old Testament and the history of the Hebrew people gained from study with Dr. Badè and Dean Herbert

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CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF SACRIFICE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Origin of Sacrifice

The Hebrews were Semites, one of the group of kindred nations, including the Arabs, the Phoenicians, the Aramaeans, the Babylonians, and Assyrians, which in ancient times occupied the great Arabia Peninsula, with the more fertile lands of Syria Mesopotamia and Irac, from the Mediterranean coast to the base of the mountains of Iran and Armenia. To learn something about the religion and religious practices of the Hebrews we must enquire into the roots of their ancestry and the ancestry of their kindred group the Semites.

It must not be supposed that the idea of sacrifice or the sacrificial system began for the first time with the Hebrews. History has shown us that no system or scheme that has

moved men has been able to start with a tabula rasa and express itself as tho beginning for the first time. As W. Robertson Smith says, "Every one who reads the Old Testament is struck with the fact that the origin and rationale of sacrifice are nowhere fully explained; that sacrifice is an essential part of religion is taken for granted, as something which is not a doctrine peculiar to Israel but is universally admitted and acted on without as well as within the limits of the chosen people."[1] Sacrifice is a universal element of worship. Moreover, recent archaeological discoveries have shown that much of the system of sacrifice as practised by the Hebrews was known by other nations and was an inheritance from the past. For example, the distinguished French archaeologist M. Renè Dussaud, in his work Les Origines Cananéenes du Sacrifice Israélite, based on discoveries made at Carthage, shows

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[1] W. Robertson Smith - The Religion of the Semites, page 3.

that the close analogy between the Carthaginian sacrificial tariffs and those of Leviticus leaves no other resource than to conclude the primitive identity of the two rituals.

Previous to historical study and scientific investigation sacrifice as an institution was considered as of divine appointment, since from Genesis 4:3-5 it appears that the divine authority sanctioned Abel's offering and considered it, by faith, more acceptable than that of Cain. Obviously such a position is no longer tenable - the origin of a religious institution is to be sought in the ever-developing minds of men rather than in sacred tradition.

Before the time of Moses the Hebrews were nomads with their loose patriarchal organization of clans and tribes. Hence, the primitive religion of Israel is found to correspond closely with that of the nomadic

Arabs. Just as the Arabs paid special homage to stones, one or more stones being set up to mark a sacred place or sanctuary, so the Hebrews in the earliest period erected a stone or mazzebah, a collection of stones, at every sanctuary. It was used as an altar, and also to represent the presence of the deity. According to tradition, Jacob erected a mazzebah at Gilead and sacrificed there when he made a covenant with Laban.[1] There was a mazzebah at Bethel which was reputed to have been erected by Jacob.[2] Again, the original sanctuary of Israel west of the Jordan in later history was, according to the Book of Joshua, a gilgal or mazzebah; and there was an altar of unhewn stones on Mt. Ebal, in the mountain country of Ephraim.[3] Thus Saul built an altar to Yahweh which he describes as "the first altar that he built unto Yahweh".[4] We find mention of similar stone altars existing at various places, such as Shechem, Mizpah, Gibeon, etc.

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1 Gen. 31:45-54

2 Gen. 28:18-22

3 Joshua 8:30f

4 I Sam. 14:32-35

Note: All Biblical quotations in this paper are from the American Revised Version unless otherwise noted.

With the conquest and settlement of Canaan, the Israelite nomads became a peasant population and this change to an agricultural life naturally affected their entire religious life. They were now thrown into contact with a people with whom they were ethnologically akin, who spoke the same language, who possessed many similar or identical customs and ideas, but who were much further advanced in civilization - the Canaanites. Since the Israelites learned the art of agriculture from the Canaanites it is natural for us to suppose that they also took over some of their religious practices. Hence it is that a study of the materials available - the Old Testament, the single and brief original Canaanite document (the Moabite stone) and the rather scanty discoveries in recent excavations - has led critical scholars to conclude that the Hebrews in general adopted the Canaanite method and theory of sacrifice. In connection with the

altar there is a mazzebah and commonly also an asherah, or sacred tree.

The Theory of Sacrifice

There appears to be a wide variety of opinion as to the theory of sacrifice: that is, as to the reason for sacrifice, the object in making a sacrifice, etc. Explanations of sacrifice, as of other rites, are naturally to be found among the peoples who have practised or still practise it: but they are often of the nature of myths and give no clue to the original meaning. Moreover, we feel that no ritual has necessarily survived unchanged in form and meaning since its inception, and even permanence of form cannot be taken to imply a corresponding permanence of meaning for the worshippers.

E. B. Tylor was the first to advance the hypothesis that "sacrifice has its apparent origin in the same early period of culture and

its place in the same animistic scheme as prayer, with which thru so long a range of history it has been carried on in the closest connection".[1] Tylor concluded that sacrifice was originally a gift offered to supernatural beings to secure their favour or to minimize their hostility. As this purpose gradually became transformed in the mind of the sacrificers, the dominant note became that of homage, which again passed into that of renunciation.

W. Robertson Smith came to the conclusion that sacrifice among the early Semites meant that an animal had to be slaughtered and that other offerings were only of a secondary consideration. He says, "The predominance assigned in ancient ritual to animal sacrifice corresponds to the predominance of the type of sacrifice which is not a mere payment of tribute but an act of social fellowship between the deity and his worshippers".[2] Further he writes,

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1 See Sacrifice in Vol. II of E. B. Tylor's Primitive Culture.

2 W. Robertson Smith - Religion of the Semites, p. 224

"The leading idea of the animal sacrifice of the Semites ..... was not that of a gift made over to the god, but an act of communion, in which the god and his worshippers unite by partaking together of the flesh and blood of a sacred victim."[1] Smith believed therefore that among the early Hebrews all slaughter was sacrifice and that a man could not eat meat except as a religious act, whereas with other foods, such as cereals, etc., only a small portion - the first fruits - need be offered and then the whole domestic store was common food. According to his view-point, the main idea in sacrifice was that of communion and fellowship with God.

George Buchanan Gray on the other hand held that in many cases there was no idea of communion at all but that the gift was given over entirely to God. He concludes that even in the slaughter of an animal only a small portion had to be given to Yahweh and that the larger part was consumed by the sacrificer and his family

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[1] W. Robertson Smith - Religion of the Semites, p. 226

or friends.[1]

The story of the sacrifice of Cain and Abel shows that the animal offering of Abel stands upon a higher plane than that of Cain.[2] As a matter of fact, the Hebrews used for "killing" the same word that the Arab used - zebach, sacrifice - which meant that all killing for food had in it a sacrificial character. Like the Arabs, the Hebrews used a cry of praise, tehillah, in connection with the sacrifice. In I Sam. 14: 32-35, we read that it was a shocking thing to Saul to see that animals were being slaughtered without a sacrificial rite and so he caused a large stone to be set up and the blood poured out at this stone. Here also is the notion, which was prevalent among the Arabs, of blood relationship. The part of the animal offered to God was the blood. The blood was the life. Just as the relation of members of a tribe with one another was a relation of blood, so the same relation existed between the tribe and its god:

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[1] George Buchanan Gray - Sacrifice in the Old Testament

[2] Gen. 4

by the transfusion of blood, first physically and then metaphorically, it was conceived that a blood relationship might be established or confirmed between individual men, or between men and God. Sacrifice was feasting together and with God on the part of the members of a tribe or family, and by this feast the blood relation was reestablished or confirmed. Even in the later ritual of the Hebrews, great stress is laid on the fact that the blood is the life and it is forbidden to eat the blood.[1] The covenant sacrifice described in Ex. 24 seems to be a certain peculiar case, for here half of the blood was given to God and half, metaphorically speaking, consumed by the people.

With the higher development in civilization of the Hebrews we find a corresponding development in the idea of sacrifice. Blood is still the most essential feature of the offering but other foods of man - vegetables, oil, wine, etc. - also constitute the material of sacrifice

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[1] Lev. 7: 27, etc.

and these were used more in the sense of a gift.

Terminology

We find in the English Old Testament some confusion of the terms used in connection with sacrifice. As a matter of fact the E.V., the R.V. and the A.V. in many cases not only do not agree but also contradict each other. No doubt a great deal of this difficulty is due to the fact that it is practically impossible at times in rendering the Hebrew into English to convey the proper conception of the original words. The later revisers of course had a much better fund of material at hand for their study than did the earlier revisers and for this reason gave different interpretations in many cases. Again, scientific investigation took into account the idea that the ritual of the sacrificial system was not a static thing but a gradual growth, etc.

In most of the cases in the A.V. and

the R.V. the word "offering" is used as a synonym of "sacrifice". In the remaining occurrences, "offering" or its synonym "oblation" is used in a more extended application to denote a gift offered to God as opposed to a secular gift in the form of a present, bribe or the like, to a fellow creature. Such "holy gifts" [1] or offerings may be divided into three classes:

1. Altar offerings - those brought into contact with the altar to be consumed thereon.

2. The stated sacred dues - tithes, first fruits, etc.

3. Special votive offerings - such as are specified in Nu. 7.

The comprehensive term "offering" or - in the R. V. "oblation" - corresponds to the Hebrew qorban, a word peculiar to the later old Testament sacrifice, as in Ezekiel and the priestly legislation. The nearest corresponding term in the older literature is minchah used in the specialized sense of cereal-offering

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[1] Ex.28: 38

or all non-bloody altar offerings of flour, cakes, wine, oil and salt.

As has been said before, the characteristic and significant Hebrew designation of an animal or bloody offering is zebach, literally slaughter.

Hence, we may say that "sacrifice" is used as a convenient term for both kinds of Old Testament altar-offerings, but in the E.V., and in strict usage, it corresponds to the Hebrew zebach, which is always used for animal sacrifices. Offering then is used in three different senses - for all sacred gifts (qorban), for such gifts only as come up on the altar, and finally in the special sense of cereal-offering.

Furthermore, in the Leviticus manual of sacrifice[1] we find the "burnt-offering" or olah - in the R.V. and A.V. also "burnt sacrifice" - literally that which goes up. Olah being used to designate the burning of the whole victim as a holocaust upon the altar. In Dt. 33:10

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1 Lev. 1 - 5

(R.V.) we have the "whole-burnt-offering" (A.V. - "whole-burnt-sacrifice") and in Ps. 51:19, "whole-offering".

Other terms in sacrifice are "meal-offering" (R.V.) and "meat-offering" (A.V.) used as the equivalents of minchah or cereal-offering. With the cereal-offering may be taken the "drink-offering" of Gen. 35:14, etc. Two varieties used together are the "votive-offering" and the "free-will offering".[1] Various other terms are "peace-offering" or "thank-offering", the meaning of which is uncertain, and "sin-offering", "trespass (A.V.) or guilt (R.V.) offering", "heave-offering" and "weave-offering". A unique offering is the "jealousy-offering" of barley meal in Nu. 5:15.

Occasions of Sacrifice

The occasions of sacrifice were many and varied. They were in part fixed by custom

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1 Lev. 7:16; Nu. 15:3; etc.

and in part dependent on the occasion or the will of the worshipper. Some of these occasions were:

1. The daily morning and evening sacrifice.
2. The yearly sacrifice of the various clans.
3. Those occuring at such festivals as the new moon, the agricultural feasts, etc.
4. The installation of a king.
5. The arrival or departure of a guest.
6. Marriage feasts.
7. Circumcision of a child.
8. The dedication of a house.
9. Mustering for war.
10. The discharging of a vow, etc.

Materials Used

The underlying idea of sacrifice in the early period was that of a common meal in which the worshippers ate with their God. Among the Hebrews no such meal was considered as provided for the worshippers unless a victim

was sacrificed; that is, unless a domestic animal was slain. This is seen from the fact that were this not necessary milk would have been the chief food offered, since milk was the staple food of the nomadic Hebrew, and further wild game would also have been offered. The absence of the use of milk in later times may be due to the rule which prohibits the use of fermented things.[1] But if this be true it is difficult to see, as W. Robertson Smith has pointed out, why wine should have been admitted in sacrifice.[2] The only definite rule against the use of milk is that of Ex. 23:19, 34:26 which says, "Thou shalt not boil a kid in its mother's milk".

As stated above, the animals used for sacrifice or mentioned in connection with sacrifice were only the domestic animals, those that normally were consumed as human food. Altho such wild animals as the gazelle and the hart were eaten, Deut. 12:22 implies that they never were used in sacrifice. Among the animals

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1 Ex. 23:18; Lev. 2:11

2 W. Robertson Smith - The Religion of the Semites, p. 220

sacrificed were oxen,[1] the calf,[2] the bull,[3] the cow,[4] sheep or goats,[5] the kid,[6] the ram,[7] etc. As George Buchanan Gray points out, such animals were used regardless of sex and of various ages.

The later so-called Mosaic legislation of the Book of Leviticus laid down very definite rules in regard to the selection of animals. For a burnt-offering or a sin-offering a male animal without blemish is required,[9] but for a less important sin-offering a female may be used;[10] for a peace-offering either a male or a female animal may be used but it too must be without blemish;[11] etc. The animals were eligible for sacrifice from the eighth day onwards, but the typical sacrifice was the yearling.[12] According to Lev.22:22f by blemish was meant any animal that was blind, broken, maimed, having a wen, etc., accidentally killed, etc. The one exception was for a free-will-offering. For this "either a bullock or a lamb that hath any-

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1 Ex.20:24; I Sam.15:21

2 I Sam. 16:2

3 Jud.6:25f; I Sam.1:24f

4 I Sam.6:14

5 Gen.22:7; Ex.20:24; I Sam.15:21 (lamb used in E.V.)

6 Jud.13:15,19; I Sam.10:3

7 to 12, p. 18

thing superfluous or lacking in his parts" might be used.[1]

According to the Leviticus laws, doves, or pigeons, were also used in sacrifice. Lev. 5:7 (A.R.V.) reads, "And if his means suffice not for a lamb, then he shall bring his trespass-offering for that wherein he hath sinned, two turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, unto Jehovah; one for a sin-offering, and the other for a burnt-offering". Again, Lev. 12:6 - "And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb a year old for a burnt-offering, and a young pigeon, or a turle-dove, for a sin-offering,....."

The vegetable or bloodless offerings consisted of:

1. Unleavened bread - Jud.6:19-21, Ex.13:6. Later history shows that leavened bread was used in sacrifice - Lev.23:17, Amos 4:5.

2. Meal or flour - I Sam.1:24, etc. According to the Leviticus code, parched ears of corn were offered - Lev. 2:14-16.

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7 Gen.22:13; I Sam.15:22

8 George B. Gray - Sacrifice in the Old Testament, p.402

9 Lev.1:3 and 4:3

10 Lev.4:28,32

11 Lev.3:1

12 Lev.22:27

1 Lev.22:23

3. Oil was largely used in the preparation of sacrificial cakes - Ex.29:2; Lev.2, etc.—but it was also used as an independent offering - Gen.28:18; Lev.14: 10, etc.

4. Wine was probably always offered along with an animal or bread or oil, etc. and not as an independent offering. However, some scholars think the liquid of many of the "drink-offerings" mentioned in the Old Testament might have been wine.

5. Water - It has been inferred from such passages as I Sam. 7:6, II Sam. 23: 16, etc. that libations of water were made to Yahweh - the evidence is not conclusive.

6. Honey - According to Lev. 2:11 honey must not be burnt on the altar but v. 12 implies that it might be offered as a gift, not placed on the altar.

7. Salt - The Priests' Code expressly ordains the use of salt - Lev. 2:13 ..... "with all thine oblations, thou shalt offer salt."

Human Sacrifice

Altho it is now commonly believed by scholars that human sacrifice was never generally practised by the Hebrews, the Old Testament does record some incidents of human sacrifice, which

have been substantiated by recent archaeological discoveries, and hence it seems fitting in this paper to say a word about it.

In Jud.11:30f Jephthah sacrifices his daughter; in I Kings 16:34 Hiel the Bethelite laid the foundation of Jericho with the loss of his first born, and set up its gates with the loss of his youngest son, etc. God is supposed to have called Abraham to sacrifice Isaac and then permitted him to offer a ram instead.[1] According to Ex.34:20 the law provided for the redemption of the first-born by the sacrifice of a lamb. II Kings 21:6, 23:10 indicate that the old custom of human sacrifice was later revived and men made their children pass thru the fire.

Excavations that have been made at the "high place" of Gezer show that the whole area of the high place was a cemetery for new-born infants. R. A. Stewart Macalister came to the conclusion that these were in all probability first-born children who had been sacrificed to

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1 Gen. 22

the deity of the high place. Two of them displayed marks of fire, but most of them had been simply enclosed in large jars. The body was usually put in head first. Two or three smaller vessels were put in with them. Macalister holds that the fact that they were children proves that they were sacrifices. Indeed, had these children not been sacrificial, they could not have been buried in the sanctuary, as dead bodies were unclean. It was not, therefore, a general place of burial.[1]

That foundation sacrifices were common is also shown by archeological excavations. In Gezer the skeleton of a woman was found built into the walls of a house. Numerous skeletons of children were also found under the corners of houses. Such sacrificial offerings were more often made under the corners of buildings, since the corners were considered sacred. At Megiddo was found the skeleton of a girl of about fifteen years, who had clearly been built alive into the

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[1] See R.A.Stewart Macalister's report on Gezer in Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement, 1903-04.
Also The Excavation of Gezer, vols.I and II, by the same author.

foundations of a fortress, etc.; at Taanach was found one of ten years of age; and skeletons of adults have also been discovered.

High Place, Sanctuary

The term sanctuary is used by modern students of Semitic religion in two senses; (1) to denote any holy place where a deity is supposed to exist, and (2) every recognized place of worship provided with an altar, etc., the special designation of which in the Old Testament is bamah (E.V. - high place).

It is clear, from the references in the earliest historical writings and by the recent excavations and explorations in Palestine, that the Hebrews adopted, in general, the Canaanite shrines and sacred places. The legends of the Patriarchs, as they have come down to us in the JE documents, connect Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with ancient Canaanite shrines and the rites and worship of those shrines.

For example, at Shechem there was a high place to a god called Baal-berith which became not only a shrine of Yahweh but one whose origin tradition in time attributed to Abraham.[1] We find high places mentioned as existing everywhere, on hills and mountains, under green trees, at springs and the like. Among the Hebrew cities of refuge and the Levitical cities of the later legislation we find not a few, the names of which indicate at once that they were ancient Canaanite or even pre-Canaanite shrines which had been taken over by the Israelites as holy places.

Considerable light has been shed on this whole matter by the recent excavations at Gezer, Taanach, etc. At these places the excavations have laid bare a series of rock surfaces covered with cup marks, which R.A.Stewart Macalister thinks surely can have been intended only for the reception of sacrificial blood. The sanctuary of the Gezer cave-dwellers

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[1] Jud. 9:4

measures 90 by 80 feet, and the whole surface is covered with cup marks and hollows ranging from a few inches to 5 or 6 feet in diameter. From one part of this primitive altar - a similar arrangement was found at Taanach - a chute or channel had been constructed in the rock for the purpose of conveying part of the blood to a cave beneath the rock.[1]

The excavations at Gezer have also furnished us with a complete example of a "high place". It consists of a level platform about 33 yards in length, having a row of standing stones, the pillars or mezzebahs of the Old Testament, ranging in height from 5 feet 5 inches to 10 feet 6 inches. These pillars are unhewn blocks simply set on end and supported at the base by smaller stones. The second and smallest of the series is regarded by Macalister as the oldest and most sacred, inasmuch as its top has become smooth and polished by repeated anointings with blood or oil, or perhaps even by the kisses

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[1] See Quarterly Statement, Palestine Exploration Fund for 1903-04; also The Excavation of Gezer - R.A.Stewart Macalister, Vol. II

of the worshippers as suggested in I Kings 19:18.

From remote ages men have felt themselves nearer to the Divine beings on mountain tops and the names of Horeb (Sinai), the mountain of God,[1] of Ebal, Gerizim, Carmel, Tabor, etc. suggest at once that the Hebrews also worshipped their God at such sanctuaries. Repeatedly in the Old Testament the worshippers are said to "go up" to, and to "come down" from, the high places. However, a local sanctuary even when it bore the name of "high place" often was within the city or on low ground. For example, the high place of Gezer, mentioned above, lay in the depression between two hills. It is reasonable to conclude that in the early days of Hebrew life every village had its sanctuary or high place with its altar and other appurtenances where sacrifice could be offered.

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[1] Ex. 3:1

The Altar

Recent discoveries in Palestine, combined with the Old Testament data, seem to suggest that the first essential of a Hebrew high place was the altar, of which several varieties were in use. It ranged all the way from the simple heap of earth or unhewn stones, as commanded by Ex. 20:25, to the more finished type of altar which recent excavations have shown was sometimes hewn out of the solid rock and approached by steps.

W. Robertson Smith is of the opinion "that the original altar among the northern Semites, ..., was a great stone or cairn at which the blood of the victim was shed. At Jacob's covenant with Laban[1] no other altar appears than the cairn of stones beside which the parties to the compact ate together; in the ancient law of Ex. 20:24-25, it is prescribed that the altar must be of earth or of unhewn stone; and that a single stone sufficed appears

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[1] Gen. 31:45-54

from I Sam. 14:32 f, where the first altar built by Saul is simply the great stone which he caused to be rolled unto him after the battle of Michmash, that the people might slay their booty of sheep and cattle at it, and not eat the flesh with the blood."[1]

Another type of altar is the table of the Semitic nomad which from Jud. 13:19 f seems also to have been adopted by the Hebrews. As was indicated under "High Place" above, the well-known rock-surfaces in Palestine, with their mysterious cup marks, are considered by Prof. Macalister to be pre-historic table-altars. A further evolution of the table-altar is seen in the elaborate structures recently discovered in Palestine. In these the rock is cut away so as to leave the altar standing free which is approached by steps cut in the rock. This type of altar is protested against by the earliest legislation of Ex. 20:26 which says, "Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto thine altar,

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[1] W. Robertson Smith - The Religion of the Semites, p. 202.

that thy nakedness be not uncovered thereon."

Connected with the "Feast of Tabernacles" we find in Ex. 27:1-8 a description of the "altar of burnt-offering" called also "the brazen altar". This altar consisted of a hollow chest of acacia wood (R.V.) - (A.V. - Shittim) - the only wood employed in the construction of the Tabernacle. It is to be 5 cubits in length and breadth, 3 in height and overlaid with a sheathing of brass. A "table of shewbread" or "presence-table"[1] is also to be provided in the Tabernacle, on which is placed the shewbread offering consisting of twelve unleavened cakes. This antique form of oblation had its origin in the naïve desire to propitiate the deity by providing him with a meal.

Among altars to which a special interest attaches may be mentioned that erected by David on the threshing floor of Araunah,[2] the site of which is marked by the present mosque of "the Dome of the Rock"; the altar erected by

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1 Nu. 4:7

2 II Sam. 24:18f

Ahaz after the model of one seen by him at Damascus[1]; and the sacrificial and incense altars to the host of heaven in the courts and probably even on the roof of the Temple.[2]

Both legislation - Ex. 21:13 f - and history - I Kings 1:51, 2:28 - attest to the fact that altars were places of refuge for certain classes of criminals. A small limestone altar, having the "horns of the altar" in the form of rounded knobs at the four corners, has been discovered at Gezer.[3]

We see then that the early religious leaders showed their zeal for the worship of Yahweh by the erection of altars. It was not until the seventh century B.C. that Josiah succeeded in abolishing "the high places" and destroying or desecrating their altars,[4] in accordance with the fundamental demands of the Deuteronomic law-code.[5]

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1 II Kings 16:10f

2 II Kings 23:2; Jer. 19:13; etc.

3 Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement, 1907, p. 196.

4 II Kings 23:5f

5 on p. 30

CHAPTER II

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM

Method of Worship - Ritual

The history of worship or ritual among the Hebrews is bound up with the history of the priesthood but since in the beginning it was ritual that developed the priesthood, we shall first consider the history of worship. Later of course the priesthood carried ritual to a high state of development.

Ritual has been defined as "the established form or forms of conducting worship". It is primarily the etiquette of man in his relation to deity. But since all things are governed and controlled by deity, the etiquette of man in his dealings with his fellow men, also constitutes a part of the ritual which the deity requires of him. Hence, ritual in its broader sense concerns not merely the direct worship of

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5
Deut. 12:1f

God, but all man's actions.

As has already been stated, sacrifice was the very heart or kernel of worship, and so ritual was, above all, connected with sacrifice. The rites of sacrifice among the nomads are of primitive simplicity. The owner ordinarily slaughters his own victim. The blood is poured upon the ground, smeared upon the sacred stone, upon the tent ropes, the door posts, and upon the persons or animals. But, when we come to study closely the ritual of sacrifice we find, as W. Robertson Smith has pointed out, that "the only system of Semitic sacrifice of which we possess a full account is that of the second temple at Jerusalem."[1] Unfortunately this system, described in the document known as the Priestly Code, altho based on ancient tradition, gives mainly the methods in use after the Babylonian Exile - a time when sacrifice was no longer the central element in worship. During the Exile the Jews had been forced to learn a new way to

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1 W. Robertson Smith - The Religion of the Semites, p. 215

approach their God, since sacrifice could not be offered in a foreign land, and when they returned to Palestine they did not return to their old type of religion. It is true that they built an altar and restored the ritual as best they could, but since there was only one place at which sacrifice could now be offered, this new ritual did not take into account the close interweaving of the sacrificial service of the old days when every town had its altar and it was easy for man to converse with his God.

It is evident, however, that there were forms of worship in use long before the Exile and so we must look back of this period to find out something about the early ritual of worship.

In the early days the Hebrew year was divided into two halves, precisely like the Arabic year, and so they celebrated the beginning of each of these halves with a

feast - an autumnal feast and a spring feast. The year began in the autumn with the hag,[1] a festival connected with a pilgrimage to a sanctuary. In the spring, at the beginning of the second half of the year, occurred the Hebrew feast of the Passover, or the ragab festival. At this feast the firstlings of the flock were sacrificed. As Prof. Badè has pointed out, "The first of the ritual functions denounced by Amos is the pilgrim-feast or hag, celebrated with animal sacrifice, processions, feasting, and dancing."[2]

The earliest form of sacrifice consisted of the pouring out of the blood to the deity, the sacrificer with his family and friends consuming the flesh, the object of the sacrifice being to establish or reestablish blood relationship. As already pointed out, this primitive form of sacrifice survived as late as the time of Saul.[3] Similarly we have in the story of

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1 Jud. 21:19; I Kings 8:2,65; 12:32

2 Prof. Wm. F. Badè - The Old Testament in the Light of Today, p. 282

3 I Sam. 14:32f

Jacob, the anointing of the mazzebah with oil,[1] and the pouring of a drink-offering and oil upon the stone,[2] the same idea of the attempt on the part of the worshipper to enter into blood relationship with the deity or his representative (the stone).

As the Hebrews settled down in Canaan and became agriculturalists, to the sacrificial customs was added the bringing of a gift, or tribute, to God in connection with the feasting. The meat offerings were accompanied by meal offerings presented to God. These offerings were cooked, being roasted, boiled or baked with oil in the form of bread or cakes.

The early ritual in Canaan was simple and largely unformulated. Thus we have in the first few chapters of Samuel a picture of the ritual practices at the national shrine at Shiloh,[3] where Yahweh was worshipped in the Ark. Once a year a pilgrimage was made to this shrine; the priests of the shrine killed the victims and

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1 Gen. 28:18

2 Gen. 35:14

3 I Sam. 1-2

poured out the blood, probably at or on the mazzebah. After burning the fat on the altar as Yahweh's portion the flesh was boiled and the priest's servant came with a three-pronged fleshhook and plunged it into the pot to obtain the priest's portion.[1] When Yahweh and the priests had received their share, the sacrificer and his party made merry on the remainder. Here we see the beginnings of the authority of the priesthood; from this chance thrust into the pot developed the custom of giving a regular allotment to the priest.

In addition to these stated festivals we find that there were private sacrifices and feasts connected with the individual, the family, or the clan which were done apart from a shrine or the use of a priest; Samuel has a feast at Ramah at which Saul was an honored guest,[2] in the story of Saul the "new moon" was observed as a sacrificial feast by all his court,[3] etc.

In order to sacrifice or to take part

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1 I Sam. 2:13f

2 I Sam. 9:19f

3 I Sam. 20:18f

in a sacrifice, at least on the occasion of the great festival sacrifices, one must be clean, that is, holy; otherwise a man might not partake of the sacred things.[1] He must abstain from woman for a certain period preceding contact with the holy food,[2] and he must put off, change, or wash his clothes. From I Sam. 21:5 it appears that soldiers on a campaign also came under the regulation of abstaining from sexual intercourse and similarly a bridegroom was exempt from military service for a year after marriage,[3] evidence of the peculiar holiness of war.

The establishment of the kingdom by David naturally exercised an enormous influence in formulating and developing a common ritual and in giving it some semblance of a national character. He set up the Ark in a tent apparently on the top of the hill on the very threshing floor which he had bought from Araunah,[4] thus giving to the ancient symbol of Yahweh its due prominence as the special and peculiar safe-

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1 I Sam. 20:26

2 I Sam. 21:5-6

3 Deut. 24:5

4 II Sam. 24:18f

guard of his kingdom. The story of the installation of the Ark gives us some idea of the features which formed a part of the ritual of all feasts in the early time.[1] There was a feast with sacrifices, music, and dancing. David himself, casting aside his common clothes, danced naked, or clad only in an ephod or linen loin cloth, as presumably did all the others. As stated in Chapter I, the tehillah, or shout of praise, formed an essential part of the ritual of sacrifice. There was the moment of silence, awaiting the coming of the deity, and then the tehillah, or burst of praise. The way this was expanded at a later date is seen from Jer. 33:11 - "Give thanks to Jehovah of hosts, for Jehovah is good, for his lovingkindness endureth for ever." There are also a number of Psalms developed on this theme.

With the erection of the Temple by Solomon we find the beginning of a more peculiar development of Hebrew ritual. Just as Solomon's

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[1] II Sam. 6

kingdom surpassed in wealth, splendor and organization any of the petty states heretofore occupying Canaan, so the Temple was a higher representation of power, magnificence and ritual than anything known before. A full description of the Temple and its appurtenances is given in I Kgs 6 and will not be discussed here. Altho the Temple in its symbolism was patterned in the main after the temples of Phoenicia and Syria, we must not forget that its core was typically Israelitish, for in the midst of all the splendor was the Ark, the old national symbol of their Deity, constantly reminding them of the days of Moses.

The national schism, or the establishment of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, effected some changes in the ritual of the Hebrews. The differences between the ritual in these two kingdoms are shown by a Judean writer in I Kings 12:28f. In the north we have the two temples, one at Dan and one at Bethel,

with their non-Levitical priests, the calves, the "Feast of Tabernacles" in the eighth month instead of the seventh, etc. But a comparison of the early Judean code[1] with the similar Israelite code[2] shows a substantial agreement in the main points of ritual: the three great feasts at which all males should appear before Yahweh, the offering of firstlings and first-fruits to Yahweh, the primitive prohibition of the use of leaven in sacrifice, the Sabbath rest, the direction that a kid should not be boiled in its mother's milk, circumcision, etc.

With the coming of the great writing prophets in the eighth century begins a strong denunciation of and reaction against the ritual of sacrifice and since sacrifice could not be carried on during the Exile - 586 to 536 B. C. - we may safely conclude that no further development was made in this ritual. The Priestly Code formulated probably during and after the Exile will be discussed in detail further on.

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1 Ex. 34:17

2 Ex. 22:14f

The Priesthood

In the most primitive Hebrew times we find that a priestly caste did not exist. David made his sons priests;[1] Micah made his son a priest at the shrine which he built;[2] Saul, Samuel, and others sacrificed, and indeed every head of a family may be said to have been a sacrificer.[3] According to later tradition, however, it appears that the priestly office was confined to the tribe of Levi and that the monopoly of this office had been given them in the time of Moses. Indeed if we are to take the story of Micah mentioned above[4] as being correct this idea is substantiated, for when a wandering Levite came along, Micah appointed him a priest instead of his son previously selected. Many scholars are of the opinion that the tribe of Levi appropriated the priestly office which at first was not theirs. For example, George A. Barton concludes that the tribe of Levi gained

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1 II Sam. 8: 18

2 Jud. 17: 5

3 I Sam. 13: 9; 14: 35; etc.

4 Jud. 17: 5f

the hereditary right to the priesthood "thru an accidental, tho natural, confusion of two similar words."[1] Again, George Buchanan Gray points out that altho Moses was of the tribe of Levi, nowhere in the Old testament, except in Psalm 99 which belongs to the post-exilic period, is Moses called a priest.[2] It is true that Ex. 29:35 and Lev. 8:35 have him discharging the duties of a priest for the period of a week. But, whatever may have been the reasons it is apparent that gradually Levites came to be preferred as priests and accordingly "priests" - Hebrew, kohenim - and "Levites" became synonymous terms, and are so used in the Book of Deuteronomy in the seventh century B. C.

Among the primitive Hebrews, the priest - kohen - acted as the guardian of a shrine and its sacred contents. At Shiloh the Ark was in the keeping of Eli and his sons,[3] and Samuel the attendant slept in the sanctuary.[4] In addition to this the priests were seers, or

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1 George A. Barton - The Religion of Israel, p. 158

2 George Buchanan Gray - Sacrifice in the Old Testament, Chapters 12 and 13.

3 I Sam. 1:3,9

4 I Sam. 3:3

oracle men; thus both Saul and David consulted the oracles thru the priest before going into battle.[1] The words which in ritualistic use came to designate the service of the priests and Levites, namely, shereth, "to serve", and shamar, "to guard", are in themselves evidences of this original conception connected with the office of priest in the earliest ritual. In consulting God thru the oracles the priest was supposed to give torah, or "the decision". In matters of theft, trespass, whether to undertake an enterprise, in times of calamity, etc. it was the priests' business to consult God to see what course to pursue - this was done by the use of the sacred lots, Urim and Thummim.[2]

With David's establishment of the Ark at Jerusalem began a more definite organization of the priesthood for that shrine. It was desirable that the services of the Ark should correspond to the dignity of the kingdom and its king and so we find that the priests were officers

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[1] I Sam. 14:18f, 36f, etc.

[2] Ex. 22:7f; I Sam. 22:10; I Sam. 14:41f; Deut.33:8

of the court and are so recorded in II Sam. 8:17 - Abiathar, son of Ahimelech, a descendant of Eli and therefore a Levite; Zadok, who was certainly not a descendant of Eli; and David's sons.

During Solomon's reign there developed a more elaborate ritual and therefore a larger and better organized priesthood -- a hierarchy with one head and various grades of priests according to the requirements and functions of the services. In Solomon's first list the priests are Zadok, Abiathar, and Zabud, son of Nathan, who is described as a sort of private Chaplain to the king.[1] Solomon himself also exercised priestly functions, blessing the people and sacrificing.[2] Abiathar was later deposed from his position and Zadok recognized as "the priest", the head of the Temple system. Later we find the head priest of the Temple at Jerusalem designated as the High Priest,[3] and in the post-exilic period the elaborate hierarchical

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1 I Kings 4: 2f

2 I Kings 8

3 II Kings 22:8

system is in its full development, with a careful assignment in written law of the functions of each of its members.

Since the priests of the Temple at Jerusalem were court appointees they were in a sense subject to the king's orders. As a matter of fact, the king often took it upon himself to officiate as the sacrificer,[1] he replaced one altar with another,[2] and even introduced foreign cults into the Temple at his pleasure.[3] However, with all the arbitrary power which kings possessed they never interfered with the succession of the priesthood established by Solomon in the house of Zadok, they do not seem to have encroached upon the priestly prerogatives of casting the lots before Yahweh, giving the torah, etc.

As stated before, the right to sacrifice was not at first a priestly function or at least not an exclusively priestly function. But in taking over the Canaanite shrines, the

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1 II Kings 16: 12f

2 II Kings 16: 10f

3 II Kings 18: 4; 21: 5, etc.

Hebrews also copied a great deal of the ritual practised there, and so they began gradually to adopt the Canaanite usage of an organized priesthood performing the rite of sacrifice. For example, we see that at Shiloh the priests soon began to be especially connected with sacrifice and to receive their portion of the animal sacrificed.[1] It was a long struggle, but little by little the priests arrogated to themselves the right to sacrifice until it became the priestly function. The perquisites connected with this exclusive function, as prescribed in the Priestly Code in Leviticus and Numbers, are in striking contrast with the modest portion assigned to the priest in the early days of Shiloh.

During the reformation under Josiah, according to the story in II Kings 22:8, Hilkiah the priest found in the Temple a lawbook which has been identified as being the greater part of the Book of Deuteronomy. This book decreed that

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[1] I Sam. 1 and 2

the Ark, which had come down from the days of the wilderness, and the cherubim which stood with it in the shrine at the Jerusalem Temple, were alone the true representatives of Yahweh, no other images were to be tolerated,[1] and furthermore, that Yahweh was to be worshipped only in the Temple at Jerusalem.[2] The people of Israel must return to the one central sanctuary if they would win the favor of God as set forth by the teaching of the Prophets. This meant that all other sanctuaries must be destroyed, no sacrifice might be offered elsewhere. Only in the Temple at Jerusalem must they celebrate their feasts and especially the great feast, the Passover, which signalized and commemorated the deliverance from Egypt.

In order to put this into effect some changes were necessary. The breaking down of all the other high places thruout the country naturally threw a host of priests out of a job; so Deut. 18: 6f orders that all the

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1 Deut. 16:21f

2 Deut. 12:1-16

priests, or Levites (in Deut. priest=Levite), of Yahweh were to be gathered at Jerusalem. They were to receive allowances of food with the priests of Jerusalem but were not allowed to perform priestly functions.[1]

Again, it was necessary to remove the restrictions on the killing of an animal in order that men might kill an animal and eat it without any sacrificial rite except the pouring out of the blood.[2] Other important changes were necessary but since they do not touch the matter of sacrifice will not be discussed here.

We can well imagine that the priestly caste at Jerusalem was not at all pleased at having a large number of outside priests thrown into their midst. Hence, we find that they relegated these country priests into a lower order - the menials of the Second Temple. In the main priestly document written about 450 B. C. we find a distinction between priests

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1 II Kings 23:9

2 Deut. 12:15f

and Levites clearly made.[1] As time passed the different families of Levites were assigned different duties by the supplementary priestly laws. Thus in Nu. 3 and 4 the care of the sanctuary and of its various vessels is assigned to different groups of Levites. By this step the evolution and organization of the priesthood became complete.

The reformation was made effective in 621 B. C. but not all that was prescribed in Deuteronomy was accomplished. So far as the people at large were concerned, a good deal of the reform was doubtless perfunctory and consisted merely in the observance of outward rites. The priesthood of the Jerusalem Temple, however, became a priesthood of aristocracy. It was largely this class and the men of wealth of Judah who were carried into captivity in 538 B. C., the plain people being left behind, and they naturally kept the religion of Israel alive during the Captivity.

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[1] Nu. 16:10; 18:23

Laws of Sacrifice in Leviticus

The sections of the Book of Leviticus with which we are chiefly concerned are: (1) the laws relating to sacrifice, Chapters 1-7; (2) the laws relating to uncleanness and purification, including the special rites of the Day of Atonement, Chapters 11-16; (3) the holiness code, Chapters 17-26; and (4) the commutation of votive offerings and tithes, Chapter 27.

Included under (1) above we have:

a. The ritual of the burnt-offering, Ch.1.
b. The ritual of the meal-offering, Ch.2.
c. The ritual of the peace-offering, Ch.3.
d. The ritual of the sin-offering, Ch.4:1-5:13.
e. The law of the guilt-offering, Ch.5:14-6:7
f. Supplementary directions for the ritual of sacrifice - addressed to the priests - Ch.6:8-7:38.

Under (2) are given:

a. Laws relating chiefly to clean and unclean animals, Ch. 11.
b. The law of the purification of women after child-birth, Ch. 12.
c. Laws concerning leprosy and the necessary purifications, Ch. 13-14.
d. Laws concerning the uncleanness of issues, Ch. 15.
e. The Day of Atonement, Ch. 16.

Under (3) are given:

a. Laws relating to sacrifice and kindred topics, Ch. 17.
b. Laws relating chiefly to social morality, Ch. 18-20.
c. Laws relating to priesthood and sacrifice, Ch. 21-22.
d. The cycle of sacred seasons and other matters, Ch. 23-25.
e. An hortatory address closing the code, Ch. 26.

Parts of this ritual have already been discussed but in order to give the reader a sense of the exactness of the laws we here reproduce, as an example, the ritual of the burnt-offering, Lev. 1, and parts of Lev. 4:1-5:13, the ritual of the sin-offering.

Leviticus 1:

> "And Jehovah called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tent of meeting, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When any man of you offereth an oblation unto Jehovah, ye shall offer your oblation of the cattle, even of the herd and the flock.
>
> If his offering be a burnt-offering of the herd, he shall offer it a male without blemish: he shall offer it at the door of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before Jehovah. And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. And he shall kill

the bullock before Jehovah: and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall present the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is at the door of the tent of meeting. And he shall flay the burnt-offering, and cut it into its pieces. And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar, and lay wood in order upon the fire; and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall lay the pieces, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar: but its inwards and its legs shall he wash with water. And the priest shall burn the whole on the altar, for a burnt-offering, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto Jehovah.

And if his oblation be of the flock, of the sheep,or of the goats, for a burnt-offering; he shall offer it a male without blemish. And he shall kill it on the side of the altar northward before Jehovah: and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall sprinkle its blood upon the altar round about. And he shall cut it into pieces, with its head and its fat; and the priest shall lay them in order on the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar: but the inwards and the legs shall he wash with water. And the priest shall offer the whole, and burn it upon the altar: it is a burnt-offering, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto Jehovah.

And if his oblation to Jehovah be a burnt-offering of birds, then he shall offer his oblation of turtledoves, or of young pigeons. And the priest shall bring it unto the altar, and wring off its head, and burn it on the altar; and the blood thereof shall be drained out on the side of the altar: and he shall take away its crop with the filth thereof, and cast it beside the altar on the east part, in the place of

> the ashes: and he shall rend it by the wings thereof, but shall not divide it asunder. And the priest shall burn it upon the altar, upon the wood that is upon the fire: it is a burnt-offering, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto Jehovah."

The ritual of the sin-offering[1] is of interest in that it recognizes five different categories of ritual:

a. For the High Priest, Lev. 4:3-12.

b. For the whole congregation, 4:13-21.

c. For a ruler, 4:22-26.

d. For the common people, (those who sin unwittingly, that is, without knowing it), 4:27-35.

e. Various other sins, 5:1-13.

The directions for a sin by the High Priest will give the reader something of the detail required in all cases:

> Lev. 4:3-12. "If the anointed priest shall sin so as to bring guilt on the people, then let him offer for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto Jehovah for a sin-offering. And he shall bring the bullock unto the door of the tent of meeting before Jehovah: and he shall lay his hand upon the head of the bullock, and kill the bullock before Jehovah. And the anointed priest shall take of the blood

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[1] Lev. 4:1 - 5:13

> of the bullock, and bring it to the tent of meeting: and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before Jehovah, before the veil of the sanctuary. And the priest shall put of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before Jehovah, which is in the tent of meeting; and all the blood of the bullock shall he pour out at the base of the altar of burnt-offering, which is at the door of the tent of meeting. And all the fat of the bullock of the sin-offering he shall take off from it: the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, which is by the loins, and the caul upon the liver, with the kidneys, shall he take away, as it is taken off from the ox of the sacrifice of peace-offerings: and the priest shall burn them upon the altar of burnt-offering. And the skin of the bullock, and all its flesh, with its head, and with its legs, and its inwards, and its dung, even the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto a certain place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire: where the ashes are poured out it shall be burnt."

An interesting description of the presentation of the first-fruits is given in part in Lev. 23:10f. A sheaf of the first-fruits of the harvest is brought and waved before Yahweh at the sanctuary; this is accompanied by a burnt-offering, a meal-offering, and a drink-

offering. Until this is done the new crop must not be used in any form. At the end of wheat harvest a corresponding ceremony is the presentation of two loaves of leavened bread as a wave-offering.[1] Deut. 26:1f also prescribes that specimens of the choicest of the fruits of the land shall be brought by each landowner in a basket and set down before the altar with a solemn liturgy of thanksgiving.

The Hierarchy of the Second Temple

As previously stated, the information which we have concerning the hierarchy of the Second Temple comes from the document known as the Priestly Code (P). This code comprised the whole of Leviticus, the ritual portions of Numbers, all the regulations connected with the Tabernacle in Exodus, and some narrative portions and statistical statements thruout the Hexateuch. According to P, the Jewish hierarchy was threefold, consisting of the high priest, priests,

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[1] Lev. 23:17

and Levites, each office having different functions and privileges. Following is a summary statement of the distinctive elements:

1. The High Priest. He was the eldest son of his predecessor in office and (as explained in Ex. 29 and Lev. 8) was consecrated by an elaborate ritual consisting of washing, solemn vesting in his special robes, anointing by pouring oil on the head, and several sacrificial rites - sprinkling with blood and the anointing with oil of different parts of the body. The ceremonies lasted for seven days.

The special duties of the high priest included the offering of a daily morning and evening meal-offering,[1] performing the ceremonial sprinklings in the case of sin-offerings for the whole people,[2] and the very important ceremonial duties connected with the Day of Atonement. On this day he, alone, entered the "Holy of Holies" and sprinkled the mercy-seat with the blood of a bullock as a sin-offering for himself, and

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1 Lev.6:19f

2 Lev. 4:13-21

that of a goat as a sin-offering for the people.[1]

2. The Priests. The priests who belonged to the family of Aaron were consecrated by less elaborate ceremonies than the high priest. During their ministrations they were required to wear linen breeches, coats of checker-work, girdles and head-tires.[2]

The work of the priests consisted in offering up all sacrifices, in the manner explained under "Laws of Sacrifice" above; giving decisions about disease, plague, etc.;[3] blowing the trumpets as the alarm of war, at various feasts, etc.;[4] and other minor duties. They were supported partly by tithes, partly by first-fruits and firstlings, and by their portions of the sacrificial victims, etc. It is in the sacrificial tariffs that the French archaeologist, M. Renè Dussaud, sees the close parallel of the Jewish system to that of the sacrificial system of Ancient Carthage.[5]

3. The Levites. The ceremony of

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1 Lev. 16

2 Ex.28:42;29:8;Lev.8:13

3 Lev.13-14

4 Nu.10:10;Lev.23:24;Lev.25:9:etc.

5 Dussaud - Les Origines Cananéene du Sacrifice Israélite

dedication for the Levites is given in Nu.8:5-22. They were sprinkled with water, their bodies shaved, and their clothes washed. They were presented to God as a sort of substitute for the first-born of the Israelites,[1] the high priest laying his hands on them, and were required to present a burnt-offering and a sin-offering.

They were regarded as the servants of the priests and in fact did all the work connected with the services which was not by law required of the priests;[2] Nu. 18:21-24 indicates that they were supported from the tithe, which was given them.

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1 Nu. 3:9-13

2 Nu. 18:2-7; 3:5-39

CHAPTER III

BELIEFS AND IDEAS

In addition to the beliefs, ideas, etc. in sacrifice which have been given in Chapters I and II we shall attempt now to show something of the idea of sacrifice in the Psalter, the changes in ideas during Hebrew history, and various other points.

The Psalter

Sacrifice is mentioned in a great many and varied ways in the Psalter. Some of these are as follows:

In Psalm 50:5 it is referred to as the sanction of the covenant between God and his people.

In Psalms 20:3, 50:8, 66:13, and 96:8 it is referred to as the regular accompaniment of approach to God.

In Psalms 51:19, 54:6, 107:22, and 118:27 as the natural expression of worship and thanksgiving.

In Psalms 56:12, 66:13, and 116:14, in connection with vows.

In Psalm 51:7 the Levitical ceremonies of purification are alluded to as symbols of the inward cleansing which must be effected by God himself.

But, the great prophetic doctrine of the intrinsic worthlessness of sacrifice apart from the disposition of the worshipper is also emphatically laid down:

In Psalm 40:6 it is not sacrifice but obedience that God desires.

In Psalm 50:14,23 it is not thank-offering but a thankful heart which finds acceptance with him.

In Psalm 51:16 it is not sacrifice, but contrition which is the condition for forgiveness.

> In Psalms 4:5, 24:3, 26:6, and 66:18 the moral conditions which alone can make sacrifice acceptable and are requisite for approach to God are constantly insisted upon.

Writing about the Psalter, Prof. John P. Peters states, "In spite of the repeated reworkings of the Psalter a religious development may be traced in its books. In the first book, in general, sacrifice is assumed without question, the same attitude which appears in the introduction to the Book of Job, and the simple and joyful side of sacrifice is presented. In books two and three we find the most vehement denunciations of sacrifice, and also the most anthropomorphic pictures of sacrifice, indicative of a period of change. The outcome was a certain mystical treatment and spiritualization of sacrifice, which reaches its full development in the latter books of the Psalter, where sacrifice is removed, as it were, from the everyday life of the people into an inner court, and where it

has become the function of a holy priesthood. Aaron, or the priests, and the Levites, who had not been mentioned in the first books, now appear continually as the leaders and representatives of the congregation for the sacrificial ceremonies."[1]

Admitting the fact that a religious development can be traced in the Psalter we fail to see how such development can be catalogued by books in the manner indicated by Prof. Peters. For example, in Psalm 40:6-8, one of the psalms of Book I, the Psalmist declares

> "Sacrifice and offerings thou hast no delight in;
> Mine ears hast thou opened:
> Burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required.
> Then said I, Lo, I am come:
> In the roll of the book it is written of me:
> I delight to do thy will, O my God:
> Yea, thy law is within my heart."

Offerings are insufficient of themselves and they are only valuable in so far as they typify the "living sacrifice" of self. If that

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[1] John P. Peters - The Religion of the Hebrews, p. 372

sacrifice is offered the material offering is unnecessary.

Again, conflicting ideas are to be found in the same psalm. In Psalm 51 the writer one moment declares that sacrifice and burnt-offerings are not desired by God, vv 16-17 declare that the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; and immediately afterwards in vv 18-19 the Psalmist states that only when the walls of Jerusalem are rebuilt can sacrifice be acceptable to Yahweh.

Passing now to some of the outstanding references to sacrifice in the psalms we shall endeavor to point out something of the change of attitude that took place in the religious life of the Hebrews in regard to sacrifice as reflected in the psalms.

Considering v 3 of Psalm 20

"Remember all thy offerings,
And accept thy burnt-sacrifice;"

Here the king is preparing to go out

to battle and he offers solemn sacrifices. The whole psalm breathes a spirit of simple faith in Yahweh's aid. May he remember all the offerings by which kings have expressed their dependence on him and may he accept those now offered before the present expedition.

Again, Psalm 22:25

"Of thee cometh my praise in the great assembly:
I will pay my vows before them that fear him.
The meek shall eat and be satisfied;"

The allusion here is to a thank-offering vowed in the time of trouble. The flesh of a sacrifice offered in performance of a vow was to be eaten on the same day on which it was offered, or on the morrow. The Psalmist invites the meek to join him in this eucharistic meal.

Take Psalm 50:5,

"Gather my saints together unto me,
Those that have made (or make) a covenant with me by sacrifice."

The reference is not merely to the

original ratification of the Covenant with the nation at Sinai but also to its recognition and maintenance by each fresh generation with repeated sacrifices. Sacrifice had its divinely appointed place in the economy of the old Covenant.

Psalm 54:6,

"With a freewill-offering will I sacrifice
unto thee:
I will give thanks unto thy name, O
Jehovah, for it is good."

Clearly, sacrifice was an acceptable and necessary part of worship in the early days of the religion of Israel.

Turning now to some of the later psalms we see that sacrifice no longer held the central point in worship but that the worship became more spiritual.

One sacrificial practice which Wellhausen holds was not employed in the Mosaic ritual until the Exile was the incense-offering.* It was thought of as food presented to Yahweh who accepted it by smelling the odor rather than eat-

* Many scholars maintain that recent discoveries in Palestine show that Wellhausen's position is entirely wrong. However, Wm. F. Albright in his book, The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible, p108 says, "We therefore note that the altars of incense found in Palestine, so far from disprov-

ing it. Thus, Psalm 141:2

"Let my prayer be set forth as incense
before thee;
The lifting up of my hands as the
evening sacrifice."

The ascending smoke of the burnt-offering would no doubt have been thought of as in some sense pleasing to the Deity.

The writer of Psalm 50 treats the old idea of sacrifice with sarcasm. He says, vv 7-15 and v 23

"Hear, O my people, and I will speak:
O Israel, and I will testify unto thee:
I am God, even thy God.
I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices;
And thy burnt-offerings are continually
before me.
I will take no bullock out of thy house,
Nor he-goats out of thy folds.
For every beast of the forest is mine,
And the cattle upon a thousand hills.
I know all of the birds of the mountains;
And the wild beasts of the field are mine.
If I were hungry, I would not tell thee;
For the world is mine, and the fulness
thereof.
Will I eat the flesh of bulls,
Or drink the blood of goats?
Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving:
And pay thy vows unto the Most High;
And call upon me in the day of trouble:
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify
me.

Note continued from p 64 -
ing Wellhausen's view on this particular point, help materially to prove its correctness. On the other hand, they explain why incense was not used in the ritual employed by the official Mosaic religion of Israel; it was too closely bound up with

.....
Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanks-
giving glorifieth me:
And to him that ordereth his way aright
Will I show the salvation of God."

This psalmist represents God as repudiating with scorn the idea that he needs the food of animal sacrifice, and declares unequivocally that all the sacrifice which God wishes is that men should be thankful and should direct their ways aright. The context makes it clear that spiritual sacrifices of thanksgiving are meant, not the material sacrifices of the altar. The vow was discharged by such spiritual sacrifice, as contrasted with the flesh sacrifice of Psalm 22 above.

The author of Psalm 51 held a similar view. He says, Psalm 51:16-17

"For thou delightest not in sacrifice;
else would I give it:
Thou hast no pleasure in burnt-offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:
A broken and a contrite heart,
O God, thou wilt not despise."

This psalmist agrees with the other as to the uselessness of animal sacrifice. God re-

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Note continued from p 65 -
objectionable pagan practices." However, Albright holds that the Priestly Code would never have introduced this practice into the Tabernacle unless there had been a warrant for it in old tradition. He then goes on to show that during the Prophetic

quires something more than mere thanksgiving and outward morality; he requires a penitent heart. Here again, God does not delight in material sacrifice but the sacrifice of a contrite heart. A broken spirit and a contrite heart are those in which sorrow and affliction have done their work and the obstinacy of pride has been replaced by the humility of penitence.

So also in Psalm 69:30-31

> "I will praise the name of God with a song,
> And will magnify him with thanksgiving.
> And it will please Jehovah better than an ox,
> Or a bullock that hath horns and hoofs."

It is clear that spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving are more acceptable than the most perfect animal victim. Many more cases from the Psalter could be considered but sufficient evidence has been given to indicate the changes which took place in the idea of sacrifice.

Note continued from p 66 -
Age this practice had been denounced and incense was eliminated from official Mosaic ritual.

Further Ideas

Our study has shown us that the sacrificial worship of ancient Israel had a prevailingly joyous character; to eat, drink and rejoice before Yahweh. The stated feasts in harvest time and vintage, the new moon and Sabbath, were all seasons of rejoicing; and the occasions of public and private sacrifices at other times were, in general, of a joyful nature. The banquet was accompanied by music and song, not always of what we should call a religious kind;[1] dances, also, were customary;[2] but the excesses to which such festivities are exposed did not fail to occur.[3]

However, there was also the less joyful note; in times of private distress or public calamity men set themselves to expiate the offence that had provoked God's anger, to propitiate him by gifts and recover his favor.[4] Fasting before Yahweh, wearing the garb of

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1 Am. 5:23

2 Ex. 32:19; I Sam. 18:6; Jud. 11:34; etc.

3 I Sam. 1:13f; Am. 2:7f; Hos. 4:14; etc.

4 II Sam. 21:1f;24:18f; Deut.21:1f; etc.

mourning, was an ancient and common means of appealing to his mercy. In ordinary cases propitiatory sacrifice differed from common sacrifice, not in rite, but in the spirit and mood of the worshippers. When God was manifestly incensed men would hardly venture to approach him with sacrifice until they had reason to hope that his wrath was somewhat appeased.[1]

Pre-Exilic Ideas

Under the influence of the great pre-exilic prophets of the eighth century a change took place in the religious ideas. They declared that it is not by sacrifice that Israel can win the favor of her God. Amos proclaimed Yahweh as the God of social righteousness - ritual formed no part of his religion. Sacrifices and burnt-offerings had no part in it. These Amos declared were no part of Yahweh's original Covenant. In most emphatic terms he

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[1] II Sam. 24

proclaims Yahweh's displeasure and even abhorrence of the sacrificial feasts. Listen to him, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, tho ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts."[1] In that age of the world, when in every land animal sacrifices were regarded as a necessary element of religion, this was a very bold position to assume. Hosea, a younger contemporary of Amos, goes even further. The unethical worship which was practised by Hebrews all about him was in his view really worship of Baal. Hosea adds the element of love to the religious conception.

Next we find Isaiah inciting Hezekiah to break down the high places of Yahweh which smacked so much of Baal worship and to centralize the worship in Jerusalem that the worship of Yahweh might have a distinct form of its own.[2]

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1 Am. 5:21f

2 II Kings 18

As previously stated, this abolition of the local sanctuaries actually took place in the reign of Josiah about 621 B.C. and the Temple at Jerusalem became the only legitimate place of sacrifice, as required by the legislation of Deuteronomy. Jeremiah the great prophet of this period regarded religion as a change of heart rather than an outward institution, hence, the ritual of sacrifice became to him a secondary consideration. Moreover, he declares that Yahweh never gave any commands about sacrifice in the Mosaic period.[1] As Prof. Badè has so aptly put it, Jeremiah "joins Isaiah in stigmatizing it as a man-made ritual."[2]

Thus we see that in this pre-exilic period the religious life of the Hebrews was changing from one in which sacrifice was the main element to one in which sacrifice was gradually being looked upon as not being the sum and substance of worship.

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1 Jer. 7:22

2 Wm. F. Badè - The Old Testament in the Light of Today, p 284

Exilic and Post-Exilic Ideas

No nation has ever undergone so striking a spiritual experience as that which befell Israel during the Exile. Jeremiah and others had paved the way for a non-sacrificial worship which in the Exile became a reality. But undoubtedly it was only the compelling force of circumstances that could have induced the people to remain content with a form of worship alien to tradition and practice. The people had been brought up on the old territorial conception of religion which confined a deity and his worship to a limited area - the same kind of religion that made Naaman take with him two mule-loads of Yahweh's land that he might worship him in another place. Now far removed from Palestine in a strange land they realized that sacrifice could no longer be offered to Yahweh and so they were compelled to carry on their religious observances in another way.

That the community life of the Jews in Exile was similar to that to which they had been accustomed in their own land, and that they had complete freedom in the exercise of their religious duties, is clearly indicated in the Old Testament. Jeremiah in his letter, "sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders of the captivity, and to the priests and to the prophets, and to all the people,"[1] makes it evident that they were permitted liberty to move about within areas of settlement, to build houses, plant gardens, marry and beget children, etc. This also implies complete freedom of worship. Statements in the Book of Ezekiel also show that a good deal of freedom was permitted to the Exiles.[2]

However, the extinction of the state and the destruction of the Temple had awakened a new feeling of national and individual guilt. Sin-offering and trespass-offering we have seen had always been offered, but the discipline of

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1 Jer. 29: 1-7

2 Ezek. 8, 14 and 20

the Exile further developed the conviction of the need of purification and propitiation. Alongside of the deepening sense of sin also went a heightened conception of the Divine holiness, due in large measure to the teaching of the exiled priest-prophet Ezekiel. He and those like-minded, such as the author of the Holiness Code, insisted that a holy God required a holy people: "Ye shall be holy; for I Jehovah your God am holy."[1] God's all-consuming holiness requires that His people shall keep themselves free, not only from moral transgressions but also from ceremonial defilement that would interrupt the relations between them and their God. The Priest's Code teaches that the object of sacrifice and offering is to maintain these relations unimpaired. Thus the sacrificial system of the priestly writers is chiefly characterized by the somber earnestness which takes the place of the joyousness of the pre-exilic worship. This is largely

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1 Lev. 19:2

due to the greater emphasis laid upon the sacrifices as piacula, as the means of expiation and propitiation.

To substitute a new form of worship of Yahweh must at first have presented real difficulties to the Jew. Since the regular feasts could not be observed as in the past, the seasons at which they had been kept were in all probability observed as memorials. The Sabbath, tho now without its prescribed sacrifice, became the chief and regular day of worship - the distinguishing mark of the Jew. Great stress also came to be laid upon the rite of circumcision, there was a greater elaboration of the Law - what work could be permitted on the Sabbath, etc. The responsibility of the individual came into prominence, the Jew's conception of God changed, more emphasis was laid on prayer to Yahweh, etc.

Carrying the discussion of the changes in religious ideas to any further length would be to write a thesis on the religion of the

Hebrews, which is obviously not within the scope of a paper on sacrifice. We shall therefore conclude with the remark that we have seen the institute of sacrifice change from the "be all" of worship to the point where it is relegated to the inner courts of the Temple, there to be zealously guarded by a few priests.

FINIS

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